Dear Js, 4/4/75

CBS Covers the World: What It Takes To Makes a Story.

Again a record I want to make as a letter. With what lies immediately ahead I may forget some of this and I do want a record.

We are at the tail end of a day-long windstorm more powerful and destructive than many hurricanes I've been through. We are just on the right side of the snow that accompanied it but were smack in the middle of the worst of the wind.

One particularly bad spot was the garage in which my car was for catching up on some of the minor wreckage of the garage that repaired it after a wreck of months ago. They were put out of business, I hope for the rest of the day only, by a string of eight power poles right in front of it going down. The whole area was without current for several hours. This also mean that the men who are laying the floor felt they had to stop when they couldn't use power tools. And that we may thus have a bigger weekend mess from that job.

Ernie Eban, a British filmmaker, has been here for several days. We thus had a car in which to retrieve Lil, who had her own close shaves, first twith the wind ripping open the door to her office and then by tearing a plastic cieling panel out and crashing it just short of her. Getting her from the office to the car, a few feet, was all I could do, the wind was there that strong.

When we got back home we found the lane blocked by the prettiest of the pines that show from the road and the largest. It was down right accross the entrance. We can't get Ernie's car out until we get that pine cut up and away. I didn't tell Lil yesterday but we also lost a very pretty one we'd almost lost in a storm more than a year ago and thought I'd saved. It was partly out of the ground, I had it back in place with a steel cable. This time the wind took the roots from the other side and send it crashing into I can't tell what until I can clear it up.

Come daylight back to the woods! With a strong wind still blowing.

Less than a mile away the wind took a house trialed a car was towing and laid it atop that car! Flipped it right over in the direction they were going. Lost TV aerial, too.

This was the kind of day it was when George Herman called.I was glad it was George.

Several weeks ago I got an order from the CBS News library in NYC for some copies of the books. I took the occasion to enclose a letter with the books and got a call after he received the books from the man who was responsible for the order, Roger Fineman, radio news. On his own he felt it was time for them to take a new look. His has been careful, responsible and fairly complete from our conversations. He knows there are misgivings about their record of the past and with the new interest felt it was time to update his superiors, on his own time. Because of his interest I then told him, off the record, of the new transcript and of my plans to let it out with which, if they have an interest, they will have to conform because I can't have my friend beat on the story. When I got enough of the withheld spectro to see a way in which it can purge that particular mess I called him, again off the record but from his subsequent call he apprently did not so understand it. He could understand clearly what no copper on the curbstone from the missed bullet means. He handed in a memo and the Cronkite desk got excited and was, in his account, off and running. My conern was that from my experience it depended on which Washington reporter got the story how easily they'd be conned and the effect of this disclosure ruined. I was pretty pointed on this. Ernier thought from my end I handed it well, being forceful without being insulting to Fineman. I wound up saying that the problem was cedibility, their concern about mine but actually theirs with me, that mine was not really in question but attitudes make this the copout posture. I would, however, be glad to work with them, had more they could have, all documented. Well, he said, I was to hear from them anyway. I'd heard before, I said, and from fine reporters who are the worl's worst investigators. He knew this was true. I'd prefer to hear from a man who knows me and is not hungup on

the notion that I'm a nut, their means of excusing their own shortcomings and failings. If he could arrange with the DC desk for it to be George Herman, despite the fact that this is not George's usual bag or beat, it could help. I do want the story out, I told him, am giving all this cost and work away, but doesn't want the government to be able to corrupt the whole thing all over again.

He was able to arrange this and I was surprised to get George's call during all the blowing yesterday. We talked for about an hour. The Cronkite desk in NYC might have been excited byt in Washington the prospects look dim. George gave me this clear reflection of their traditional view. He was specific. But we went over the evidance I have obtained and he understands it. I told him of more that relates that I did not want used so he'd see hwo completely the story stack and backgrounded him on this so he'd see that it is more of a story. He is for it but expects he will be about alone in this attitude there.

Fortunatelt he and Steve Barber are friends. When I told him I put only one restriction on the story, that a friend be covered and not beat on it, he asked who the friend is. I thought and said an old friend of his. He confirmed that they have been friends since war-coverage in Korea and is willing to work withSteve if CBS goes for the story.

This reminds me of a similar situation in which I covered a friend who was late with a story and lost CBS coverage because of their desk's resentment. It again involved George. It was my first FOI suit. Paul Valentine never did get the story in and CBS's machismo was offended and they killed the one George did.

During all of this there were also indirect "negotiations" with Cesar, who was to negotiate with the FBI and the USAttorney. After I had a glance at the papers they have provided I asked Jim to call and and address them as I asked him, to begin with "I have a client who is hard to control when he gets angry and you have made him angry. If you do not know what he's capable of I'll be glad to tell you, but he wants me to tell you he is offended that you try to fuck around with him this way particularly becuase you think he knows and understands so little. He asks me to tell you to deliver in full immediately or after all this effort to avoid it we ll see you on court as fast as we can drag you there and lay out the whole record of your deliberate violation of the specific mandate of Congress on this particular matter." Something like this, probably stronger. I gave him explanations all over but asked him to restrict it to their non-delivery of all I'd seen and all I know they have to have. Told him to add that with this amateurish trickery I would also demand as a condition of dropping the suit a written statement from a responsible official that I'd beeen given 100%. They get the idea that someone would be held to account. His negotiations yielded their silly explanation but the thing is in limbo. They admit alteration of one docuemtn but claim it hid only initial, exactly what I d told Jim and what I want and why. He said that I8m prepared to go to court on that issue alone and he agrees. They claim falsely that I turned down what they did not give and Jim denied it. I had turned down the plates at $50 each and volunteered that I didn't want the nitrate test results only. I had specifically said I wanted the entire file they showed, asking only about the per-page cost. Jim remembers it this way. Because I'd expected this I'd asked to be able to tape the whole thing, them doing the same, and they refused in writing so there will be a record of who is probably lying. The way I let it rest with our last conversation, up to 500 pages buy. I want the whole thing regardless of cost and somehow I'll meet the cost. He agrees. This can, with straight press treatment, break the whole thing open so the money has to be and will be found.

I'd backgrounded John Hanrahan, who felt he had to give the national desk a memo. He also understands and sees the story but can't again handl e as a Maryland one. In two days he'd heard nothing.